



# 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

# INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

CURRENT JANUARY 2018

## WHY PLAN?

Planning is a basic and important activity for any person, family, business or community with a vision of the future they want to achieve. It is even more essential for those who hope to realize their vision but whose resources of time or money are limited. A city plans so it can be efficient in the way it uses its limited resources, particularly financial, and so it can be effective in creating the community its residents, businesses and taxpayers want. Planning creates the road map for the quality of life and economic vitality that keep a community successful.

Weatherford's General Plan describes the type of community today's residents and stakeholders want to enjoy in the future. It presents the community's vision for its future and establishes the overall principles the City will follow in making decisions that help realize that vision. Policies and criteria in the General Plan should be followed in City decisions on rezoning and development proposals, capital projects and public programs and investments. The General Plan also lists the priorities for short-term action to implement the Plan's policies. These statements – from the broadest vision to the most specific action step – give everyone in the community a shared approach to achieving Weatherford's best possible future.



## CREATING THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan was created through a process that combined public input, professional expertise and decisions by Weatherford's elected and appointed leaders. Public input was received through several means, each designed to give people interested in Weatherford's future a choice in the way they participated. Early in the process, online input engaged community members whenever someone wanted to find information or provide input. Community open houses were scheduled for face-to-face interaction among participants.



These sessions gave the City's staff and consultant's insights into the community's concerns and ideas about Weatherford today and in the future.

A General Plan Advisory Committee was appointed by the Weatherford City Council. Committee members represented the varied interests and perspectives held by stakeholders in the Weatherford community. The Committee was involved throughout the process to build consensus about the Plan's focus and approach to key issues and geographic areas.

The City staff and consultants provided professional expertise, analysis and the knowledge of best practices for planning and development. Staff's insights into past initiatives and current Weatherford programs and policies ensured that this Plan reflects the experience and character

that make Weatherford unique. All City departments participated in discussions and workshops, shared their own plans and policies, and provided expertise. The consultant team brought an understanding of the approaches other communities use to address issues like those facing Weatherford, as well as analytical tools to evaluate the implications of development and investment choices.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council also provided direction at key points during the process. The involvement of these elected and appointed leaders gave the planning process the benefit of current deliberations on issues, reinforcing the direction established by current decisions and using the Plan to provide clearer and more consistent direction for the future on important issues facing Weatherford now.



## PLAN STRUCTURE

This General Plan contains twelve chapters. This chapter, the Introduction, sets the stage for the information and policies that follow. The second chapter provides the components of Overall Policy Direction – the Vision Statement, Guiding Principles and Preferred Scenario – that together describe the future the Weatherford community hopes to achieve.

Chapters 3 through 10 are Plan Elements that provide guidance on particular issues. These elements address:

- The citywide issues of housing, historic preservation, community character, resilience and phasing
- Land use and development, including new development, redevelopment and maintenance of existing neighborhoods and business areas



- Economic development, with attention to economic sectors and specific employment centers
- Mobility for people in vehicles, taking public transportation, on bicycles and walking, as well as aviation and freight
- Parks and open space, with discussions of parks, open spaces, recreation facilities and trails
- Infrastructure, including water, wastewater and stormwater systems
- Public safety, including police, fire, emergency management and medical support systems
- Quality of life, including libraries, other City facilities and education



These Plan Elements address issues that affect the entire city and set policies that, for the most part, apply throughout the study area. Chapter 11 focuses on Planning Areas. Each of the seven Planning Areas has a distinctive blend of existing development, assets, opportunities and challenges. In Chapter 11, the special aspects of each planning area are discussed and appropriate policies and investments are recommended.

The last chapter addresses Implementation. These recommendations are essential because a plan requires action if a community is to successfully achieve its vision. The implementation framework includes eight types of action steps: capital investments; education and engagement; financial incentives; guidelines; programs and partnerships; regulations; studies & research; and tracking. Each of these plays a role in carrying out this General Plan.

The information and materials developed throughout the planning process are contained in a set of appendices, listed in the table of contents and available as a separate document for those who wish to review it.



### POLICY DIRECTION

#### ROLE OF POLICY DIRECTION

The Weatherford General Plan sets policy direction for the City to follow. It should be used by City Council, City Boards and Commissions and City staff in making decisions on issues related to the investment of public funds and future development or reinvestment within Weatherford. The General Plan covers the currently-incorporated City of Weatherford. It also addresses the Weatherford Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), the area into which Weatherford is expected to grow.

As its name suggests, the General Plan provides general policy direction. City facilities and infrastructure systems must have more detailed planning and direction to ensure they provide adequate and timely service to residents and businesses. Individual City departments and programs may also have their own detailed plans. This General Plan serves as the “umbrella” plan that integrates all these plans so they provide coordinated and consistent service to the Weatherford community.

This Weatherford General Plan replaces and supersedes the City’s previous plan, adopted in 2002. It serves as the comprehensive plan for the City for the purpose of compliance with Texas Local Government Code Sections 211.004 and 213.002. Weatherford’s zoning regulations will be adopted in accordance with this comprehensive (or general) plan.



### TERMINOLOGY FOR THIS GENERAL PLAN

A long-range plan like this General Plan uses some specific terms to express its policy direction. Since these terms may mean different things to different people, it's important to begin the plan with an explanation of how they are used in this document:

- The **OVERALL POLICY DIRECTION** for this General Plan is found in Chapter 2. It includes a Vision Statement, Guiding Principles and a Preferred Scenario. Together, these three components provide the broadest statement of the future community Weatherford hopes to achieve.
- The **PLAN ELEMENTS** focus on specific topics or systems that contribute to Weatherford's future success. They are found in Chapters 3 through 10. These Plan Elements uses the following terms:
  - **Policies** explain how Weatherford intends to approach these issues. They are statements of direction that should be followed in making decisions unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise. If decisions frequently follow a direction that is different from a policy in this General Plan, then that policy should be reviewed and refinements considered.

- **Action Items** are steps to take next – what the City and its partners are going to do in order to achieve this desired community. They could be specific capital projects, studies or other programs. Over time, it should be possible to measure progress on implementing the plan by 'checking off' those action items that have been completed.
- Some Plan Elements reference 'Goals' and 'Objectives' from other City plans. These statements are taken directly from these adopted facility and system plans. This General Plan is designed to reflect the direction of these earlier plans, so these important statements are included here for reference.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR WEATHERFORD

A Japanese proverb states: "a vision without a plan is a daydream, but a plan without a vision is a nightmare." This Weatherford General Plan provides both the vision and the plan so the City of Weatherford can achieve the future its residents and property owners want. It guides decisions so Weatherford's limited resources can be used effectively and efficiently. By adopting and implementing a General Plan, today's leaders are making a difference to the character and vitality of the community their children and grandchildren will inherit.